

Questions to ask when evaluating a potential long-term care facility for your child

The Facility

- Ask to be shown around all the locations at the facility, not just one room and a common area. Is the entire facility accessible to your child?
- Is the facility co-ed or all male or all female? How many residents?
- Do the residents share rooms? How are roommates determined?
- Can your child decorate his or her room as desired? What personal items can be brought from home?
- What happens if roommates don't get along?
- How long has the facility been in operation?
- What is its goal or mission? What is the overall philosophy in providing a home for residents?
- Is this facility part of a large provider? If so, how large is the provider and how many facilities does it run? How long has the provider operated long-term care facilities?

Staff Training

- What qualifications are required to work at the facility?
- What training is given to new staff members? Are the staff trained to work with people with developmental disabilities?
- How is the staff trained? Are they trained on the job, by going through manuals, or is the training offered by presenters?
- Are staff members required to take annual refresher training? Who gives the training and what subjects are covered?

Staff Turnover

- How many staff work at the location? How long have most of the staff worked at the facility?
- What is the average time a caregiver working with the residents will stay at the facility?
- If a staff member leaves, do residents have a transition time to get used to the new person?
- Are the staff offered a benefits package?
- Is there a staff recognition program? Do you see "Employee of the Month" photos in the facility?

Staff

- What is the staff-to-resident ratio on all shifts? On outings?
- What are the shifts at the facility? Are staff members awake at all hours?
- How much supervision is provided for residents? Is there anything to stop a resident from walking or running out of the facility?
- When is the LPN or RN on duty?
- What type of criminal and abuse/neglect background checks are run on staff? How often are these repeated?
- What is the hiring policy if a person has a criminal record?
- Does the facility do drug testing and what is the policy on this? What would happen if a staff member has a negative result?
- If a staff member is having difficulties with a resident, who does he or she contact for help? What resources are available to support the staff member on duty in providing the best care? What is the organizational structure in the facility?

Safety Procedures

- What are the plans for emergencies (such as fires, tornadoes, elopements, etc)?
- Are the plans posted?
- Are there practice drills; how often?

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Health Issues

- Is there a facility doctor?
- How are doctor, dentist, eye, and other health appointments handled?
- How often are residents checked by a doctor?
- Does the facility provide transportation for medical appointments?
- Does the facility set up these appointments?
- Does the facility notify guardians when an appointment has been arranged and let the guardian know the outcome?

Medications

- Where are medications kept?
- Who distributes the medications?
- What safeguards are in place regarding medications?
- How does the facility handle “as needed” medications?
- Are negative behaviors ever handled with medications?

Behavior

- How are negative behaviors handled? What techniques are implemented by staff when a resident displays disruptive or abusive behavior? Discuss any behaviors demonstrated by your child.
- What negative behaviors would exclude an individual from living at that facility?

Activities of Daily Living

- Do the residents need to be toilet trained?
- What independent skills must the residents have?
- Do the residents need to be able to exit the building on their own (especially in the case of an emergency)?
- What is the daily schedule? Can your child follow his or her existing schedule, so that transition from the home to the facility will be easier?
- How often do residents bathe, etc?
- If a resident refuses to bathe, how is this handled?
- Is there a mandatory bedtime?
- When are the meal times? Are snacks available during the day?
- What are the typical foods served at meals? Are there any choices? Are foods prepared to accommodate resident's tastes and likes?
- Can the facility accommodate special diets? Discuss your child's needs.
- If a resident misses a meal due to sleeping or lack of cooperation, can he or she receive food at a later time?
- What assistance can be provided by the staff with daily living activities? Discuss the level of assistance your child would need.
- Do the staff teach daily living skills?
- Are physical, occupational or speech therapies offered at the facility?
- What supplies are provided by the facility (for example, diapers, assistive technology, adapted equipment)?
- How is replacement clothing handled? Is it purchased by the facility or are the family/guardians expected to provide it? Is clothing labeled and kept exclusively for its owner?

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Activities

- What activities are provided at the facility?
- (If relevant to your child) does the facility transport to workshops or supported work locations?
- Do the residents go out into the community, where, how often? What happens if a resident doesn't want to go on the activity? Discuss any activities you would like your child to continue (for example: Special Olympics, swimming, bowling, etc.).
- Who pays for outside activities?
- Does the facility transport residents to church? If so, to which denominations?

Finances

- What funding sources pay for the room and board? Is there any situation where the family could be asked to pay some of the costs?
- Are the residents given any spending money?
- If so, how is spending money handled for residents with and without a guardian?
- Do residents receive a clothing allowance?

Guardians

- How and when are guardians informed of any changes, problems, etc.?
- What is the visiting policy? Can the family come whenever they wish or are there visiting times?
- What is the procedure for taking a resident home for the weekend or a few days?
- What is the maximum time a resident can be absent from the facility before the bed is lost?

Complaints and History of Facility

- How does the facility process concerns and complaints from residents or guardians?
- Have there been any reports of resident abuse reported to the Division of Family Support or Division of Senior Services?

Assess the Atmosphere of the Facility

- Do the staff seem relaxed and friendly?
- Do the residents look happy?
- Do you think the facility could meet your child's needs?
- Were all your questions answered thoroughly and completely?
- Can the director supply the names and phone numbers of families that can be called as references for the facility?